

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 4, 2011

CONTACT: Jim Philipps
202-942-4220, jphilipps@naco.org

Leggett participates in historic NACo/White House Summit to discuss county government issues

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett and fellow county officials from across the country –most holding leadership positions within the National Association of Counties (NACo) –participated in an historic five-hour NACo/White House Summit on May 3 to discuss at length critical issues of concern to county governments and the communities they serve. The highlight of the half-day summit was an appearance and remarks by President Obama and Vice President Biden.

Leading the in-depth policy discussions were four cabinet secretaries representing the leaders of the federal government's domestic policy agenda: Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Health and Human Services; Secretary Janet Napolitano, Homeland Security; Secretary Ray LaHood, Transportation; and Secretary Shaun Donovan, Housing and Urban Development. Also leading discussion was Administrator Lisa Jackson, Environmental Protection Agency.

"This was an extraordinary opportunity for county officials to speak directly – and at length – with President Obama's cabinet secretaries and other key Administration officials," said NACo President Glen Whitley. "It's literally been decades since county officials have had this substantial access to those who work at – or report to – 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. We are grateful that the White House invited the nation's counties to the table to discuss issues important to counties and communities."

Whitley led NACo leadership during the meetings, held in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, formerly known as the Old Executive Office Building adjacent to the White House. Other NACo leaders participating included First Vice President Lenny Eliason, Commissioner, Athens County, Ohio; Second Vice President Chris Rodgers, Commissioner, Douglas County, Neb., and Immediate Past President Valerie Brown, Supervisor, Sonoma County, Calif.

Most of the other county officials invited by the White House, about 100 in total, chair or vice chair [NACo's 13 policy steering committees and subcommittees](#).

The summit was divided into three separate session discussions led by a cabinet secretary or his/her designee:

- Session I: Breaking the Cycle of Jails & Poverty: A County Perspective;
- Session II: Infrastructure and Sustainable Communities; and

- Session III: Health Reform Implementation & Medicaid.

NACo Executive Director Larry E. Naake said the seeds of this historic meeting were planted in 2008, when more than a dozen individuals were running for their party's nomination for President of the United States.

"Through our Restore the Partnership Campaign, NACo reached out to the candidates to ensure that when the people selected a new President, that county officials would have a seat at the table," Naake said. "What transpired on May 3, 2011 – to enjoy that degree of access and communication with the White House – was truly unique and unprecedented in the 76-year history of the National Association of Counties."

Leggett said it was an honor to be invited by the White House to discuss federal issues affecting counties and communities and the challenges counties face in providing the services people depend on.

"I found the discussion on the common fiscal challenges faced by County governments to be especially useful," said Leggett, "as well as the discussion of how Counties and the federal government can work together to enhance sustainable communities."

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The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.